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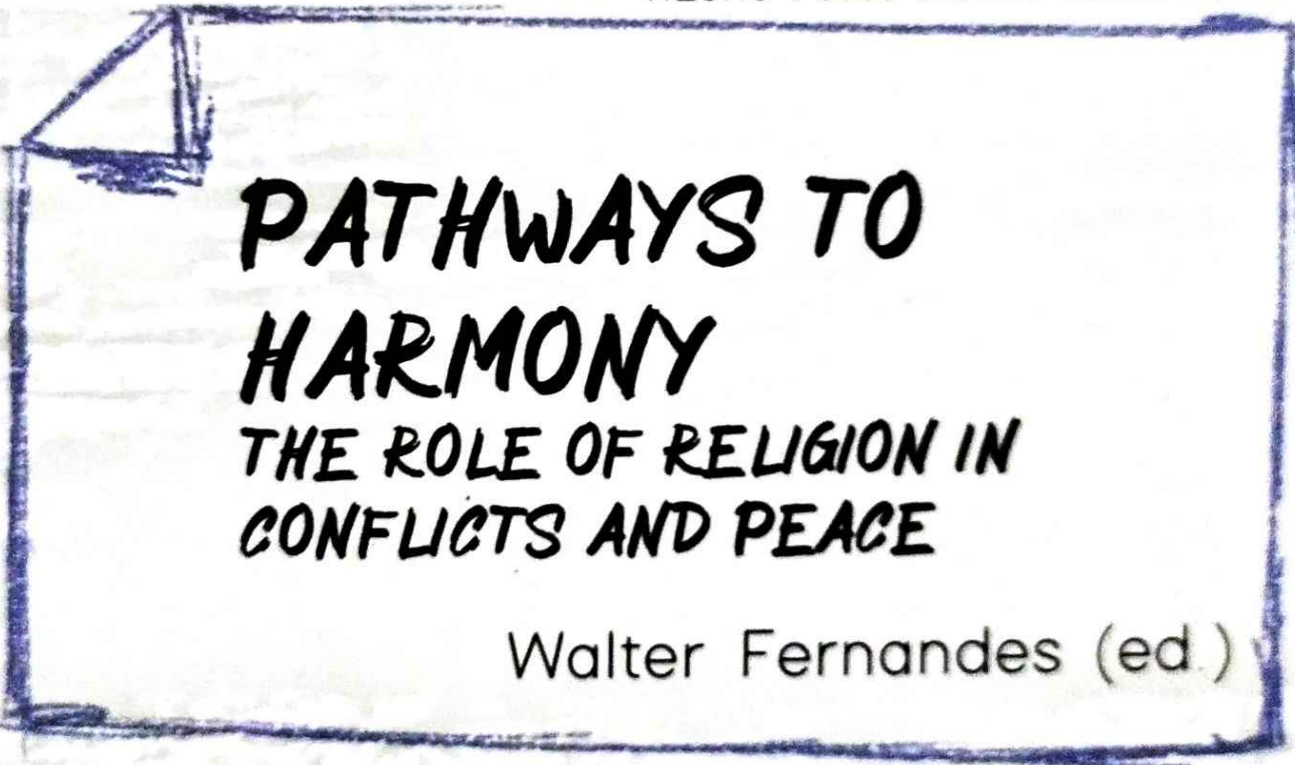
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**PATHWAYS TO
HARMONY**
THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN
CONFLICTS AND PEACE

Walter Fernandes (ed.)

NESRC Peace Studies Series No. 17

Pathways to Harmony
The Role of Religion in Conflicts and Peace

Editor

Walter Fernandes



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What Makes the Mizo Accord Survive? A Study of the Church on the Peace Processes in Mizoram

Lalnundika Hnamte

Since independence in 1947, the Indian State has confronted the challenges of integrating national and sub-national movements into the Indian Union. It is visible in Mizoram where the Mizo Accord of 1986 was signed between the Government of India (GOI) and the Mizo National Front (MNF), an armed nationalist organisation that for 20 years fought for the independence of Mizoram. The Accord has often been hailed on academic and political platforms as the only successful peace accord in the Northeast signed by the GOI with an armed nationalist organisation. That was made possible to a great extent by the efforts of the Churches. During what are called the years of disturbance in Mizoram (1966-1986), political parties and large cultural organisations became practically redundant. That is when the church leaders stepped out to act as mediators between the Government and the MNF to initiate a dialogue. In this process the Churches played the role of socialising the public to the ideology of peace and non-violence. The signing of the Accord and the sustained peace in Mizoram since 1986 is largely attributed to the role of civil society, particularly the Churches. The political and the academic bodies have recognised the role of the Churches in the making and sustaining of peace in Mizoram but there is hardly any academic work on this theme. This paper seeks to give an account of the role played by the Churches in establishing and

sustaining peace in Mizoram. The paper has a two-fold objective. Firstly, it studies the Church as a third party in the peace process of Mizoram, as a mediator between the Indian State and the armed nationalist organisation, the MNF. Secondly, it studies the Church, a religious institution, as an agent of political socialisation, forming and shaping a political culture, a culture for peace and non-violence in the State.

1. The Background

Knowing the background of the actors and situations helps one to understand better why the Accord has been successful. That effort is made in the present section.

The Background of the Accord

The Mizo Accord of 1986 has often been regarded as a model accord owing to the sustenance of peace in the state. In his Address at a Special Session of Mizoram State Legislative Assembly on 30th November, 2017 the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind hailed the Accord of 1986 as a 'shining example all over the world' and praised the political stakeholders and civil society organisations of Mizoram for creating an atmosphere for peace and development in the State (Press Information Bureau, 2017: November 30). During the visit of the US Ambassador to India, Richard R. Verma to Mizoram in January 2017, the Governor of Mizoram, Lt. Gen. Nirbhay Sharma, referred to the Mizo Peace Accord as the most successful experience of conflict resolution by the Government of India. He asserted that the success of the Mizo Accord lies in the solidarity of the Mizo people and praised the social and administrative system and the role of the churches and voluntary organisations in the State (Vanglaini, 2017: January 14). He made the same statement on the 31st State Day on 30th June, 2019. Some studies too have hailed the Accord as exemplary. For example, Satapathy (2004, pp. 447-448) hails Mizoram as a role model for conflict resolution in India's troubled Northeast as well